

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04520 141237Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5185

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4520

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI PBOR LE IS MOPS

SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 6851, (B) STATE 218559, (C) BEIRUT 4519

1. OUR REPLY TO REF B WAS BASED ON WEIZMAN'S POSITION AS DESCRIBED IN TEL AVIV 6846. ACCORDING TO THIS MESSAGE, WEIZMAN, AFTER STATING GOI POSITION (PARA 1), SAID "PLEASE SEE IF YOU CAN USE YOUR GOOD OFFICES TO ARRANGE FOR PLO TO MOVE NORTH OF THE LITANI." WE DO NOT THINK THE USG SHOULD TAKE THIS LINE WITH BOUTROS AND SARKIS.
2. GIVEN NATURE OF USG RELATIONS WITH THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT, WE CANNOT ACT IN A PURELY "GOOD OFFICES" ROLE IN THE CLASSIC SENSE. BOUTROS IS CERTAIN TO ASK FOR OUR VIEW AND IF WE SAY WE ARE SIMPLY PASSING ON ISRAELI RESPONSE FOR GOL REACTION, HE AND SARKIS WILL ASSUME WE SUPPORT, OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCE IN IT.

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3. AS BOUTROS INDICATED WHEN HE INITIALLY OUTLINED HIS PROPOSAL FOR PEACE IN SOUTH LEBANON TO THE AMBASSADOR AND CHARGE ON AUG 26 (BEIRUT 4204), HE AND SARKIS BELIEVE THAT U.S. WILLINGNESS TO PERSUADE ISRAELIS TO GO ALONG WITH THESE ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE A TOUCHSTONE OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO BE EVEN-HANDED AND FAIR IN CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE MIDDLE EAST PEACE. WHAT SARKIS AND

BOUTROS WANT FROM US IS NOT JUST AN ISRAELI REACTION, BUT ASSURANCES THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHICH HAS BEEN SO PAINSTAKINGLY NEGOTIATED. IF AT THIS POINT USG ATTEMPTS TO PERSUADE SARKIS AND BOUTROS TO TRY TO MOVE ALL OF THE PALESTINIANS NORTH AND WEST OF THE LITANI, IT WILL BE A CLEAR SIGN TO THEM THAT WE ARE UNWILLING TO PUT ANY PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS ON THIS MATTER.

4. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS SIMPLY INCAPABLE OF IMPLEMENTING ISRAEL'S CONDITIONS, EVEN SHOULD IT WISH TO DO SO. IN OUR VIEW, AS EXPLAINED REF C, THE PALESTINIANS WILL NOT AGREE TO WITHDRAW COMPLETELY NORTH AND WEST OF THE LITANI AND AMBASSADOR MURPHY'S ASSESSMENT INDICATES THAT THE SYRIANS ARE NOT PREPARED TO TRY TO FORCE THEM. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMS TO US WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO GAIN FROM PRESENTING ISRAELI PROPOSAL AS IT STANDS TO BOUTROS AND SARKIS.

5. AS WE UNDERSTOOD USG POSITION ON BOUTROS' PROPOSAL, WE WERE NOT SIMPLY PRESENTING IT TO ISRAELI GOVERNMENT FOR THEIR REACTION BUT ASKING FOR THEIR SUPPORT. SINCE THEIR RESPONSE IS TO REFUSE SUCH SUPPORT EXCEPT UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, IT SEGDJPOKODS APPROPRIATE FOR USG TO GO BACK TO THE ISRAELIS AND EXPLAIN WHY THEIR
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CONDITIONS CANNOT BE MET.

6. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT INFORMATION REPORTED BY AMBASSADOR LEWIS IN TEL AVIV 6849, COMBINED WITH DEPARTMENT'S LAST QUERY IN PARA 4 REF B, MAY OFFER A GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR A COMPROMISE SOLUTION. ALTHOUGH WE ARE CONVINCED, AS REPORTED REF C, THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR BOUTROS AND SARKIS TO OBTAIN A FORMAL COMMITMENT NOW FROM THE PLO TO WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM THE POSTS IT IS PERMITTED TO OCCUPY IN SOUTH LEBANON AND THE ARQUB UNDER THE CAIRO AND SHTAURA AGREEMENTS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE LEBANESE WOULD BE WILLING TO TRY TO OBTAIN A FURTHER, MORE EXTENSIVE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THIS AREA AT A LATER TIME, IF ISRAEL WILL ACQUIESCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHTAURA III. IN THIS CONNECTION, AS WE HAVE REPORTED, ADF COMMANDER KHATIB DOES NOT THINK THAT PLO INTENDS TO MAINTAIN THE MAXIMUM FORCES ALLOWED TO IT IN THESE AREAS AFTER THE BULK OF THEIR FORCES HAVE BEEN MOVED OUT. ONCE THE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL IS UNDERWAY, LEBANESE-ISRAELI CONTACTS UNDER ILMAC UMBRELLA MIGHT OFFER A VENUE FOR DISCUSSING THE TIMING AND EXTENT OF SUCH FURTHER

PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL AND A MEANS OF REASSURING THE
ISRAELIS ABOUT THE SIZE AND STRENGTH OF WHATEVER
PALESTINIAN UNITS REMAIN SOUTH AND EAST OF THE LITANI.

7. IN SUM, IF THE ISRAELIS' AIM IS POLITICAL; I.E.,
A GUARANTEE THAT THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE SOUTH AND EAST
OF THE LITANI WILL BE ELIMINATED, WE DO NOT THINK THE
LEBANESE CAN HELP THEM. IF THEIR CONCERN IS SECURITY,
WE THINK LEBANESE WOULD BE WILLING TO DO WHAT THEY
CAN TO ASSURE THAT PALESTINIAN PRESENCE THAT WILL REMAIN
IN SOUTH LEBANON AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHTAURA
III WILL NOT BE A THREAT TO ISRAEL OR TO THE CHRISTIAN
LEBANESE IN THE SOUTH.

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